Mu'tah Lil-Buhuth wad-Dirasat, Humanities and Social Sciences Series, Vol. 26, No.5, 2011

# Teaching Risky Text-Topics in Reading-Writing Courses in a Culturally-Conservative Context: Views of Omani English Majors

**Juma Salim Njadat**[*]

## Abstract

Instructors and authors of reading-writing textbooks in English generally avoid text-topics which deal with such issues as politics, religion, 'terrorism', permissive male-female relationships, homosexuality and so forth. These texts are henceforth referred to as risky text-topics. The central reason for this avoidance in the case of teachers is the desire to protect their hard-to-find jobs, and in the case of publishers, to sell their textbooks in the EFL market world-wide. These reasons are understandable from the commercial and the personal standpoints. Nevertheless, the avoidance and the absence of serious topics such as these from textbooks and coursebooks contributes, at least partially, to the lack of interest and the lack of engagement in class activities which are widely observed in EFL classes[1]. Furthermore, such avoidance is likely to limit the students' opportunities to become acquainted with a substantial amount of vocabulary which is crucial both for successful communication in English and for understanding issues of major concern for English-speaking societies. This study was conducted to explore if, when, and why risky text-topics such as these can be utilised in EFL reading-writing classes for adult English majors at colleges and universities in a culturally and a religiously conservative context such as The Sultanate of Oman. The paper examines views on the use of this type of text-topics among students at the Department of English at Rustaq College for Applied Sciences, which is one of the six public colleges in Oman offering the bachelor degree in English language and literature for students who plan to become teachers of English at public schools. Based on the results, the paper provides recommendations for utilising this type of text-topics for more productive reading-writing courses.

Subject Terms: risky text-topics, reading–writing courses in English as a foreign Language

Geographical Terms: The Sultanate of Oman, The Colleges of Applied Sciences, The College of Applied Sciences at Rustaq, Departments of English Language and Literature, English Language majors

* قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة مؤتة.

تاريخ تقديم البحث: 2009/9/7. تاريخ قبول البحث: 2010/6/8.

# المواضيع والنصوص الخطرة في مساقات القراءة والكتابة في اللغة الإنجليزية ومدى إمكانية تدريسها للطلبة في مجتمع محافظ: وجهة نظر الطلبة في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في سلطنة عمان

**جمعه سالم نجادات**

**ملخص**

جرت العادة أن يتجنب مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية وكذلك المؤلفون والناشرون تقديم نصوصا و مواضيع تتعلق بقضايا مثل السياسة، الدين، الإرهاب، العلاقات الإباحية بين الجنسين، مثيلي الجنس، وغيرها مما صنفت في هذه الورقة البحثية بالمواضيع والنصوص الخطرة. ويرجع السبب الرئيسي في تجنب هذه المواضيع إلى حرص المدرسين على الاحتفاظ بوظائفهم التي بات من الصعب الحصول عليها في ظل الظروف الاقتصادية التي يشهدها العالم حاليا ، وإلى حرص المؤلفين والناشرين على تسويق مؤلفاتهم ومنشوراتهم في سوق عالمي يتسم بالتنافسية الشديدة. وبالرغم من أن هذه الأسباب يمكن تفهمها والتعاطف معها إلا أن تجنب هذه المواضيع والنصوص وحجبها عن الطلبة والإكتفاء بنصوص ومواضيع مستهلكة قد يتسبب في استفحال ظاهرة الملل وفقد الاهتمام التي نشهدها لدى الطلبة بما يناقش ويقدم في مساقات القراءة والكتابة في الصف. إضافة لذلك فقد يترتب على تجتنب هذه المواضيع حرمان الطلبة من فرصة التعرف والإلمام بمفردات ضرورية للتخاطب الناجح في اللغة الإنجليزية ولفهم القضايا والمواضيع التي تحتل اهتماما واسعا في المجتمعات الناطقة بهذه اللغة، وتتم مناقشتها باستمرار في وسائل الإعلام وخصوصا تلك الناطقة بالإنجليزية. وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف إمكانية ومبررات شمول هذا النوع من النصوص في مساقات القراءة والكتابة التي يدرسها طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في الكليات والجامعات في مجتمع محافظ مثل المجتمع العماني. وتناقش الدراسة أفكار وآراء طلبة تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية العلوم التطبيقية في الرستاق بسلطنة عمان حول هذه المساقات والمواضيع. وفي ضوء النتائج التي توصلت إليها الدراسة من خلال البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها من الطلبة، تقدم الورقة البحثية توصيات تحدد إمكانية وكيفية استخدام هذا النوع من النصوص في مساقات القراءة والكتابة في اللغة الإنجليزية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** النصوص والمواضيع الخطرة، مساقات القراءة والكتابة في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، سلطنة عُمان، كليات العلوم التطبيقية.

## Introduction

Background to the study: Working against the Odds in English Departments and Understanding the Role of Religion and Culture in Shaping Students' Reading Styles, their Perceptions, and their Attitudes Towards Sources and Symbols of Knowledge

The idea of this study evolved from the author's six- year experience of teaching English, mainly reading and writing, in Oman to English majors who plan to become teachers after graduation. This was preceded by twenty-three year, experience of teaching English majors in another Arab country, Jordan. Within the Omani context, specifically in the Department of English at Rustaq College, the author has noticed three major obstacles that English teachers, particularly those teaching reading and writing have to struggle with as they try to help students become independent and critical readers and writers. The first obstacle includes boring texts, students with low academic achievement and with low motivation for learning in many cases, a lack of a clear understanding among many of these students of the value and usefulness of English literacy skills at the personal as well as at the societal levels, and a tendency among them to view reading and writing as academic courses that have to be passed and forgotten.

Boring text-topics are required in reading/writing courses because quite often there are no suitable alternatives, and in many cases individual teachers are not consulted. The choice of textbooks is normally done by administrators who may not have adequate familiarity with what happens in reading/writing classes. Individual teachers have no control over what textbook or coursebook to teach in language courses including reading-writing courses. This often results in the teacher and the students finding themselves in a situation where they have to read and discuss text-topics which are boring and irrelevant to students' needs, interests, and environments. An example of this is that in a reading course for college students, the author once had to ask students to read and analyze a story about a lady who spent her fortune on covering her skin with tattoos, and a photo of her body with tattoos all over is shown in the text, see Heyer (1994: 23). The same students were also asked to read and discuss another story in the same textbook about a cat (ibid: p.7). These examples are provided here to illustrate the point that as important as these text-topics might be in some cultures, they do not generally constitute interesting and

engaging topics for the typical Omani student because Omanis, and Muslims in general, are not supposed to have tattoos on their skin because of religious restrictions, and in relation to cats, most, if not all Omanis do not keep cats as pets inside their homes. In addition to boring texts, the common division and compartmentalization of language skills into reading, writing, listening-speaking components which are taught separately has indirectly resulted into a false belief among many students that language skills are unrelated and can be broken down into portions or segments that can be taken one at a time in a piecemeal fashion. In other words, students often forget that reading, writing, and the other language skills are fundamental parts of every single course that they have to study in their academic programs and they need these skills for life.

Regarding the quality of students who have been admitted to English departments at The Colleges of Applied Sciences over the past 3 years, it may be important to note that the only requirement for admission that these students had to fulfill was passing the Thanowiyyah Ammah Examination (General Secondary Education Certificate Examination), which is administered by The Ministry of Education. The student's grade average on this examination for all of the subjects taken in the final year determines his/her admission to the college, and those who achieve the required grade average regardless of their English grade can qualify for admission to the English department. It is also necessary to point out that general examinations like this one are sometimes subject to political and to logistical considerations which are often in favor of passing the largest possible number of students in order to open space for the upcoming batches of students in the following year. More explicitly, the government in some cases cannot afford to fail all those who deserve to fail among the students taking Thanowyyiah because there is not enough room for them in schools in the following year. Therefore, this type of general examinations cannot guarantee that all the students who pass it will automatically be able to successfully complete the requirements of a university degree in English language and literature. This is why many English departments around the world select their students' intake through carefully designed admission tests which include English proficiency tests in order be sure that these students are capable of improving and can finish the degree requirements within the specified period of time. This requirement is also useful in ascertaining that these students can benefit and can comprehend the readings assigned to them.

In the case of the English departments at The Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman, the reliance on the grade average in the Thanowiyyah Ammah Examination as the single requirement for admission to English departments, and the absence of more accurate admission tests have allowed students with minimum, and sometimes no sufficient English language proficiency to be admitted to these departments, thereby taking the chances that should have been given to more qualified students. In practice, what this means for the English language teacher who has to teach classes where these less qualified students are enrolled is that s/he has to work hard, not only to help these students improve their English language proficiency to a level which enables them to keep up with their more competent classmates, and with the requirements of the course, but also to improve their motivation for learning and for involvement in what happens in the classroom. It naturally takes a lot of effort to help these students achieve even minimally adequate language proficiency levels for the job of English teachers awaiting them upon graduation. This situation means that teachers and professors are virtually expected to transform some students who are substandard in terms of their foreign language proficiency and their intellectual abilities into English language teachers with a period of time which is adequate only for those who are suited and those who had sufficient preparation for this field at their schools. The following is an excerpt from a memo written by an English teacher, who happened to be a native speaker of English, in which she complains to her head of department about the lack of interest in learning among students in her General English class:

> Dear Dr. …(2)
>
> This afternoon I've had a particularly miserable time with the Gen. Ed. Geographies despite creating a review games & buying sweets for their prizes. The girls just can't be pleased and the boys just aren't interested, so I give up till the semester finishes, they can work in their books &workbooks- khalas(3)

This teacher is complaining against her General English class, but it should be pointed out that from the author's first-hand experience as a teacher of English in the same institution where this teacher was working, the kind of rebellious students with low motivation for learning described here will be found in the B.A. degree programme in English at The Colleges of Applied Science though in much smaller numbers. Moreover, it could be argued that the lack of interest and the unwillingness to learn shown by these students might seem an exceptional case and can partially be blamed on the teacher's style of teaching, class management skills, or method of delivery. Nevertheless, the type of topics included in the coursebooks taught cannot be excluded as one of the factors leading to this not-so-uncommon resistance to learning in English classes when the students and the teacher are required to spend class time on boring, irrelevant, and sometimes childish topics and materials. In reference to this Nunan (1994: 176) found 'childish materials, e.g. picture books' to be among the least helpful factors in foreign language learning in his investigation of what he classified as 'forty-four good language learners' (p. 171).

The second obstacle that a reading/writing teacher has to deal with is that due to the restriction of text-topics introduced to Omani students since their first encounters with English to the so-called sanitized text-topics and 'sanitized' language content, these students appear to have been conditioned to take for granted two things about the English language content. First, they have in general become used to one variety of topics expressed in English which is restricted to what has already been labeled as ‘sanitized’ text-topics. One effect of this restriction which anyone who teaches Omani English majors can observe is that during the first two years of their enrollment in the English programme, many of them will be on their guard against any digression by the teacher from the specific topic being discussed in class, and some will not hesitate to tell the teacher about words or topics that they don’t like to hear in class. In some cases, it seems as if some of the more conservative among these students want to take the lead and the credit for protecting Islamic morality against what they tend to perceive as alien, immoral, and offensive ideas and practices which accompany the teaching of English. This is despite the deep respect that these students have traditionally learned to show for their teachers. It implies that these students have learned to regard English mostly as an academic subject which is limited to a number of carefully selected topics, and it is likely to limit their experience and familiarity with the richness and the depth of the language.

Secondly, the restriction of the language input that students receive to the sanitized topics has either left students ignorant about what is written about them in English, or has lead students to assume that what is written in English about them, their culture, their faith, and their political causes is always positive, supportive, fair, and truthful. This is achieved through textbooks and through teacher-selected materials that avoid serious and risky topics and issues.

Limiting the topics and the input introduced to students in this manner may indirectly weaken their motivation to improve their reading-writing skills because they won't have experienced the bitterness and the insecurity that results from reading texts that contradict, and sometimes attack their system of beliefs. Consequently, they would not understand the degree of urgency for improving their English literacy skills in order to deal with these texts. It may be useful to point out in this context that for a language learner, one of the most motivating factors for improving writing skills is responding to criticism and defending his/her religious and political beliefs. This can be particularly inspiring for a learner when s/he gets a chance to publish his/her writings. The author has been through this experience and undoubtedly it has had an extremely positive influence on his motivation for improving his English writing skills. It happened in 1989 when he wrote a letter to the editor (Njadat, 1989) that was published in The State News, the chief daily campus newspaper published by Michigan State University in the U.S. (see appendix A for a copy of this letter). This letter was in response to the media uproar and in some cases attacks on Muslims because of their reaction against the defamatory book against the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, which was written by Salman Rushdie and was published by Penguins in the UK in 1989.

A third obstacle that many of the teachers who are new to the Omani context may not be aware of is what might be termed excessive reverence for print, and by extension, reverence for authors' views and opinions which could lead to fear and unwillingness to read critically and to respond and express personal views in writing. This is perhaps one of the least recognized issues and it merits some clarification here. On average, students in most of the conservative Arab/Muslim countries are generally brought up to show strong respect for what can be called collectively the guardians and the sources of knowledge and enlightenment, which include religious

scholars, teachers, and authors. The *Qura'an* and the Hadeeth (documented sayings, deeds, and legislations of Prophet Muhammad) abound with glorification and promises of rewards in life and after death for righteous and virtuous learned men and women, and for those who pass useful knowledge to others. Likewise, the Arabic/Islamic culture and heritage are rich in literature that values books, authors, teachers, and all other individuals who devote their time and effort to the service of knowledge. And talking of respect for teachers, it is relevant to quote here the famous line of poetry by the Prince of Arab Poets in the present era, Ahmad Shawqi, (which almost every Arab student memorizes) in which he urges students to show excessive respect and reverence for their teachers, comparing teachers to prophets:

**قم للمعلم وفه التبجيلا        كاد المعلم أن يكون رسولا**

In translation, it reads:

**Stand up and salute the teacher      for the teacher is almost a prophet**

Another relevant example of the dignified role of the teacher in the Arabic tradition is the popular saying that "I would be like a slave for whoever teaches me one letter (of the alphabet).

Shawki's praise does not stop at teachers but also extends to books. This is evident from his dedication of a whole poem for books where he favors books over his human friends as he asserts in the first line of this poem:

**أنا من بدل بالكتب الصحابا        لم أجد لي وافيا إلا الكتابا**

In translation it reads:

I am the one who replaced friends with books

None did I find faithful to me except the book

More illuminating perhaps, and more relevant to the praise of books and by extension to their authors is this centuries' old, semi-sacred line of poetry:

**أعز مكان في الدنا سرج سابح        وخير جليس في الزمان كتاب**

Its translation is something like:

The highest position of honor is to be a soldier (defending the nation faith, values)

And the best companion through time is a book

This line of poetry expresses one of the most popular beliefs about books that students in Arab countries learn from an early age. The poet who composed this line of poetry may be exalting a specific type of books which were popular in his time, which brings up the issue of what constitutes a book in a particular culture at a particular time in history. Nevertheless, it seems that many of the young Arab school graduates come to colleges and universities bearing in mind its glorification of books in the general sense. And their reverence for books does not seem to be limited to books in Arabic, but to foreign language books as well.

The outcome and the implication of all of this religious and cultural indoctrination and glorification of books as sources of knowledge, though beneficial and generally in harmony with universal beliefs and global wisdom about the value of knowledge, it may nevertheless cause some students to forget, or to overlook the fact that books are written for different purposes and their content is often shaped by the personal, ideological, cultural, and political beliefs of their authors. And just as there are books that aim to inform, enlighten, and benefit humanity, there are other books which are written for the purpose of corrupting the souls and the minds, advancing political agenda, serving propaganda, spreading certain beliefs and life styles, and instigating the readers against the existing social, religious, and political institutions. There is a consensus therefore that different books require different types of reading, and the reader must always be ready to engage in conversation, and sometimes in dispute and in disagreement with the ideas, the views, and the opinions expressed by the author. Intelligent readers, as it has become abundantly clear, are active, not passive individuals, who are ready to question the views and opinions expressed by the author in the text while reading a text. To help Omani students develop this indispensable skill for their education, teachers must familiarize them with the different types of texts, different types of readers' purposes from the reading, and the different reading strategies that different texts require. In particular, these students need to understand the difference between reading a holy book such as the *Qura'an*, or the books of Hadeeth (reported and documented sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad) which

for the Muslim should represent the final, indisputable truth, and books written for other purposes by ordinary human beings which can be open for questioning. More specifically, these students need to be convinced that what is printed in books does not always express the truth and that authors are human beings who have their faults and their limitations. In short, students need to learn that it is legitimate to dispute authors' ideas and they should also be trained to deal with views and ideas that contradict theirs.

The observations made by Osterloh (1986: 78) about how Muslim students view and approach the *Qura'an*, how they read it, and how their style of reading the *Qura'an* may influence their reading of other books are quite relevant in this context. These observations apply to Omani students, and at the same time provide useful information to teachers, particularly to expatriate teachers, about the influence of culture and religion on Omani students' views and attitudes towards reading, texts, and authors: 'In Islamic countries, the Koran is in the back of the reader's mind when dealing with a text. Hence, what is written is necessarily associated with absolute truth.' This observation supports what has already been pointed out which is that Omani students, like many Muslim students, may subconsciously approach other books with this attitude of reverence. Books for them are viewed as repositories of valuable and often indisputable knowledge. This will be the case especially with young readers, and during their first encounters with books published in the West. In order to train and help a student in a Muslim country read critically, Osterloh adds that s/he 'will have to go through a series of new social experiences. He has to learn that in Western civilization something written is something man-made, and that everything is to be seen as an individual presentation or personal opinion that can be contested' (ibid.). Elaborating on these insights, McKay (1994:62) recommends that teachers decide whether or not to emphasize critical reading skills for their students depending on the cultural context in which they teach:

> Making a decision not to emphasize critical reading depends on teachers investigating the culture in which they are teaching so that they are aware of the role of texts in the culture, and then making a decision based on the needs of the students.

This raises the question of whether teachers can really afford to dispense with teaching students to read critically. If we do not teach students to read critically what type of reading would we be teaching them?

## The Related Literature

**Problematic Content of Textbooks/**Coursebooks: the shortcomings of the so called 'global' coursebooks and textbooks are becoming widely known and have been discussed by numerous authors. Chief among these shortcomings is the type of limited and often irrelevant topics that keep recurring in these textbooks and coursebooks. Before discussing the effects of this negative feature in most of the widely used textbooks and coursebooks on students, it is useful to look at some of the criteria and some of the factors that govern the publishers' selection of the topics. Gray (2002: 159) lists some of the topics that are avoided and some of the guidelines that writers and publishers follow in selecting topics for their coursebooks:

> Some publishers provide lists of proscribed topics, while others rely informally on the acronym PARSNIP (politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, and pork) as a rule of thumb. One publisher's list I saw contained some thirty items to be avoided or handled only with extreme care. These included alcohol, anarchy, Aids, Israel, and six pointed stars, politics, religion, racism, sex, science when it involves altering nature, e.g. genetic engineering, terrorism, and violence…guidelines for inappropriacy are based on customer's perceived sensitivities.

Gray illustrates the consequences of this restriction of content to what he calls 'safe topics':

> This has a number of consequences. …it means that content can become very bland. The 'one size fits all' philosophy underlying the global coursebook means that safe topics recur again and again –foreign travel being one of the most common. In the first edition of Headway Intermediate (1986) holidays, travel, and tourism were mentioned in ten out of a total of fourteen units. . (ibid)

As to the reasons behind the restriction of the content to these 'sanitized' topics, Gray (2002: 159, 166) stresses the commercial factor: 'So while coursebooks are feminized for ethical reasons they are also sanitized for commercial purposes…these coursebooks are also commodities that have to be sold globally to a variety of very different markets. This means that content is limited to a narrow range of bland topics.'

Another indication of how deeply the irrelevance of text-topics is felt is the appearance of what might be called user-friendly publications like (Tomlinson: 2002) entitled 'Humanising Your Coursebook.' This title in itself is a recognition of how far from the human element i.e. the student and the teacher some of the coursebooks have reached in terms of their content. The limitations of textbooks/coursebooks in terms of their 'bland' content, repetition of the same topics, and irrelevance to students' local and individual interests have also been recognized by Bell and Gower (2006: 118) who reiterate what few in the field would probably dispute, which is the realization that language teaching materials produced for international markets cannot satisfy all, and they stress the need for what they call compromise:

> With international materials it is obvious that the needs of individual students and teachers, as well as the expectations of particular schools in particular countries, can never be fully met by the materials themselves. Indeed, most users seem to accept that what they choose will in many ways be a compromise and that they will have to adapt the materials to their situation.

**Peculiarities of the EFL Situation in Arab/Muslim Countries and the Rationale for Exposing Students to Risky Text-Topics:** If this restriction of the language input that students receive to the recurrent bland topics in language coursebooks is expected to be counterproductive and damaging to students' interest and involvement in reading-writing world-wide, it will be particularly so in the case of students living in such a turbulent region like the Middle East, where Oman and most Arab countries are located. The Middle East as most people know from the daily scenes shown on world televisions has witnessed the most destructive, and the most brutal wars, atrocities, and economic blockades against most of its indigenous population. It has been the theatre of large scale military confrontations, occupations, and political repression. Furthermore, despite the abundance of

oil and other natural resources, and the big aspirations of most of its people for a better future, most of the people in this part of the world have been severely victimised by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and more recently, the soaring oil prices and food shortages. This briefly is the type of environment in which most people here grow up, and these are the central issues and concerns that preoccupy the average citizen in most Arab countries. Therefore, it is important for publishers of coursebooks and for expatriate teachers to be aware of this environment because of its big role in shaping the psychology and the interests of students, and in determining the type of text-topics that will appeal to them. In more specific terms, publishers and expatriate teachers need to realise that the bland topics found in most coursebooks will seem childish, and for these students who have been surrounded by the serious problems described here, these bland topics will make language courses seem like child play and a waste of time, to say the least.

Furthermore, a careful examination of what is presented on Western media, especially after 9/11/2001 will likely show that Arabs/Muslims have been the most frequently targeted group by hostile writings as well as by media misinformation and misrepresentation. There is also an abundance of Western literature throughout the different periods of history which depicts Arabs and Muslims negatively. In general, the bulk of defamatory literature and media misrepresentation of Arabs/Muslims is simply too massive to ignore. It is partially responsible for some of the conflicts and mistrust that unfortunately have developed over history. To turn a blind eye towards this literature and towards the issues that preoccupy the minds of the Arab/Muslim EFL student, and to restrict the content of reading-writing textbooks to the so-called sanitized content can only lead to boredom and to a lack of interest and engagement on the part of these students. Furthermore, the preference for recurrent topics such as travel, movies, eating out, and the rest of the 'sanitized' topics list will probably seem like an exercise in teaching many of these students to engage in fantasy, and wishful thinking about luxuries that most of them will never ever experience. Besides, spending class time on these text-topics is likely to cause boredom which consequently leads to demotivating students for improving their reading/writing skills. A weak motivation for reading/writing is of course the last thing that any language teacher would want because we all know what it is like to convince students who lack the proper level of motivation

to delve and indulge in the task of analysing texts for the purpose of improving their reading skills.

Therefore, interesting text-topics may have to include in some cases offensive, nonconforming, and disturbing, infuriating, hostile, and strange content. They may also have to be texts that express strong and radical views and opinions. It will be unrealistic to claim that these text-topics will appeal to all types of readers and in all contexts in Oman. Nevertheless, in order to develop a genuine interest in reading and writing, students may need to undergo some sort of an emotional, cultural, as well as intellectual shock. This shock can take the shape of reading texts in which the students' religious, cultural, and political beliefs are challenged, attacked, or questioned. This is partly because students in traditional and, conservative societies may have limited awareness of the diversity of ideas and the wide exchange of views over some trends and lifestyles such as homosexuality, euthanasia, abortion, war, religion, atheism, etc. Additionally, they may be unaware of some of the prejudices and the stereotypes that members of other cultures hold against their system of beliefs and values. Furthermore, in order to realise the value of being intelligent and critical readers and writers, students need to be sensitized to the possibility that ideas and views expressed in print can lead to serious consequences and confrontations.

The need for acquainting students with the text-topics investigated in this study can be justified for other reasons such as familiarising them with relevant and frequently used political terminology, especially 'politically correct language' as noted by Tshelska (2006:20). Additionally, familiarising students with the culture of the English language and the range of topics and issues that are important to its speakers, which include some of the topics investigated in this paper, has been strongly stressed by authors like Tsou (2005: 39) who found a positive relationship between 'culture instruction' and improvement in students' language proficiency. Similarly, Dogancay-Aktuna (2006: 279-280) calls for broadening students' knowledge and familiarity with the socio-cultural and political contexts relating to English language teaching locally and globally.

In light of what has been mentioned so far, this paper will attempt to investigate students' views regarding the assignment and discussion of risky text-topics in their reading-writing classes. Besides exploring students' views on these text-topics, the study highlights the need for exploring

students' reading interests in order to provide them with the text-topics that interest them as recommended by Williams (1986: 42):

> In the absence of interesting texts, very little {in reading classes} is possible ...Interesting to whom? First and foremost to the learner, but preferably interesting also to the teacher. How do we know what our learners are interested in reading in English? Ask them what they like reading in their own language, peer over their shoulders in the library... To check the interest level of texts currently being used in your EFL reading course, ask learners to assess them as interesting, all right, or boring.

## Method

**Sample**: The sample of this study consisted of 90 Omani students; sixty-nine of whom were females and 21 were males. The disparity in number between the males and the females in the sample reflects the demography of the English department at The College of Applied Sciences at Rustaq, where more than 75% of the students enrolled at the time of the study were females. These students were enrolled in the bachelor degree programme in English language and literature, and they were planning to teach at Omani public schools after getting their degrees. The participants were 20-22 years old. Arabic was the first language for all of the subjects. They came from various urban and rural communities in Oman. Both males and females in this college observe strict national dress codes which require wearing the Omani white Dishdasha and head cap for the males, and a black Abaya and head scarf for the females. Islam, which is the religion of almost all the Omani nationals is widely practiced and is strongly observed in public life and in educational institutions. To a large extent, students in Rustaq College are typical of the rest of the Omani society in terms of observing the religious teachings and the cultural norms.

**Instrument:** The data of this study were collected through a 5-point Likert questionnaire which was designed to measure the subjects' attitudes towards reading and discussing risky texts in reading/writing courses (see appendix B). Besides requiring the subjects to provide relevant personal details, the questionnaire contained a list of twenty categories of risky text-topics. For each of the 20 categories of the text-topics listed on the scale, the subjects were asked to choose one out of five decisions that they would take if asked

to read and analyze these text-topics by the teacher and/or by the English department. The five decisions ranged from a total rejection to read and discuss the text-topics at any cost as the lowest point in terms of numeric value (point 1 on the scale) to a willingness to read the text-topic(s) for self-motivated reason(s) as the highest item on the scale (point 5 on the scale) The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by the researcher in their classes in the first semester 2007-2008 while they were enrolled in a course entitled Reading–Writing Skills Development. To insure comprehensibility, Arabic equivalents were provided for vocabulary items that were expected to be unfamiliar to the respondents and all questions from the respondents were answered by the researcher. All the subjects answered the questionnaire willingly, except one female student who was enrolled in this same course, but decided to answer only some of the questions. She explained her reasons in the following unedited passage:

> We are in Islamic, Arabic country and I think we don't even need to mention these topics in classroom."We as students in College." Due to that, our country know what is good and what is bad. So I prefer to not answer some pages: 3, 5". But my opinion for topics in page 5 are there. I think, it is better to not even talk about this in our classes because we feel shy "even to read the words only". So I am proud I am Omani because I know my country. " Please Doctor try to not give any feedback about what the students have written."

**Analysis**: Spss 10 was used to calculate the means of the subjects' approval for reading and responding to each of the 20 risky text-topics included in the questionnaire on the 1-5 point Likert scale.

**Results**: The research question that this study aimed to answer was whether and to what extent risky topics could be tolerated and approved for use in reading writing classes by Omani English majors at Rustaq College for Applied Sciences. A minimum mean score of 2.5 out of 5 was considered the dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable texts. As shown in Table 1, the mean scores obtained for the subjects' willingness to read each of the twenty types of risky texts indicate that 15 out of the twenty texts included in the questionnaire were considered acceptable to the sample.

**Table 1: Texts approved by respondents in descending order**

| Serial Number | Text-topic | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Texts that attack Islamic polygamy | 90 | 3.44 | .85 |
| 2 | Texts that accuse Islam of oppressing women and depicting Muslim women as inferior | 90 | 3.40 | 1.01 |
| 3 | Texts that link Islam with terror | 90 | 3.29 | 1.11 |
| 4 | Texts that attack Islam and Muslims | 90 | 3.29 | 1.04 |
| 5 | Texts that justify war and unrestrained force against Arab and Muslim countries | 90 | 3.27 | 1.06 |
| 6 | Texts that label Islam and Muslims as backward , savage, filthy, harsh to women | 90 | 3.11 | 1.24 |
| 7 | Texts that undermine parental authority and instigate children to rebel against their parents | 90 | 3.00 | 1.28 |
| 8 | Texts that call for denying Muslims citizenship & residence in non-Muslim countries | 90 | 2.99 | 1.22 |
| 9 | Texts that justify euthanasia | 90 | 2.93 | 1.11 |
| 10 | Texts that defend the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki | 90 | 2.90 | 1.08 |
| 11 | Texts that present Muslims as lacking courtesy, politeness, etiquette, and other forms of civilized behavior | 90 | 2.88 | 1.28 |
| 12 | Texts that encourage conflicts and disputes between men and women | 90 | 2.83 | 1.23 |
| 13 | Texts that defend abortion | 90 | 2.79 | 1.14 |
| 14 | Texts that encourage alcoholism, smoking, and staying up late | 90 | 2.73 | 1.36 |
| 15 | Texts that call for legalizing drugs | 90 | 2.58 | 1.34 |

As shown in table 2, five of the twenty texts achieved a mean score less than 2.5 out of 5 on the 5-point scale, which means that these text-topics were not sufficiently acceptable to the sample.

**Table 2: Texts disapproved by respondents in descending order of means**

| Serial Number | Reason | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Texts that encourage what is known as 'love affairs' among young males and females | 90 | 2.16 | 1.15 |
| 2 | Texts that encourage and openly discuss permissive relationships such as premarital sex and dating | 90 | 1.98 | 1.23 |
| 3 | Texts that defend same-sex marriages | 90 | 1.78 | 1.22 |
| 4 | Texts that defend nudity and the nudists' outlook on covering the human body | 90 | 1.78 | 1.30 |
| 5 | Texts that defend homosexuality | 90 | 1.78 | 1.14 |

The most frequently cited reason for the decision to read the approved text-topics was to criticize and discredit their content as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Frequency of point number 4 on the scale: 'I will read the text-topics in order to criticize and discredit their claims for the 15 approved text-topics in descending order of means:**

| Seq. | Text-Topic | Frequency of item 4 on the scale: ‘I will read to criticize | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Texts which claim that Muslim women are oppressed and are treated as sub-humans by Muslim men and accuse them of being inferior to other women | 57 | 63.53% |
| 2. | Texts that link terrorism with Islam and Muslims | 55 | 61.13% |
| 3. | Texts that label Muslims and Arabs as being backward, ignorant, filthy, closed-minded, savages, and harsh to women | 53 | 58.9% |
| 4. | Texts which attack polygamy as legalized by Islam. | 52 | 57.8 |
| 5. | Texts that justify war and the use of military force against Arab and/ or Muslim countries | 49 | 54.43% |
| 6. | Texts that attack Islam and its followers | 47 | 52.2% |
| 7. | Texts that undermine parental authority and instigate children to rebel against their parents | 45 | 50.03% |
| 8. | Texts which present Arabs/ Muslims as lacking courtesy, politeness, etiquette, and other forms of civilised behaviour | 43 | 47.83% |

| Seq. | Text-Topic | Frequency of item 4 on the scale: ‘I will read to criticize | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. | Texts that call for denying Muslims and Arabs residence and/or citizenship rights in non-Muslim countries, call for deporting them ,and justify religious and ethnic cleansing against them | 40 | 44.43% |
| 10. | Texts that encourage alcohol, cigarette smoking, and staying up late at night | 40 | 44.43% |
| 11. | Texts that encourage conflicts and distrust between men and women | 37 | 41.13% |
| 12. | Texts that call for legalising drugs | 33 | 36.73% |
| 13. | Texts that justify euthanasia | 31 | 34.43% |
| 14. | Texts that defend the US Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki | 30 | 33.3% |
| 15. | Texts that defend abortion | 29 | 32.4% |

For the 5 less popular text-topics, the most frequently chosen item on the scale was item number 1: 'I won't read this type of texts at all even if it is required in the course syllabus and even if I have to confront the instructor and the administration as can be seen in table 4.

**Table 4: Frequency of item number1 on the scale: 'I won't read this type of texts…' for the 5 disapproved texts in descending order.**

| Seq. | Text-Topic | Frequency of item number1 on the scale: 'I won't read this type of texts | Percentage of Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Texts that defend nudity and nudists' culture | 65 | 72.2% |
| 2 | Texts that defend same sex marriages | 61 | 67.8% |
| 3 | Texts that defend homosexuality | 57 | 63.3% |
| 4 | Texts that openly discuss and encourage what is known as love affairs among males and females | 50 | 55.6% |
| 5 | Texts that openly discuss sex and encourage dating, premarital sex, and other types of illicit sexual relationships | 38 | 42.2% |

Table 5 shows reasons provided by some of the subjects in response to point 5 on the scale, which asked them to provide any reasons not mentioned in the questionnaire for reading any of the 20 text-topics.

**Table 5: Unedited, self-motivated reasons provided by some of the subjects for reading the risky text-topics listed in the order of their occurrence in the questionnaire.**

| Serial number | Text-Topic | Individual Reasons provided by some of the subjects | Subjects' sex |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Texts that attack Islam and its followers | A. 'To know other people opinion and unmoslim culture.'<br>B. 'To define the Islam to foreign people.'<br>C. 'I will read to explore the western viewpoint about Islam.'<br>D. 'To know the planes [plans] of angry against islam.'<br>E. To avoid it and illustrate my opinion on the writer's opinion and says. For inforamtion | M<br>F<br>M<br>M<br>F |
| 2 | Texts that label Muslims and Arabs as being backward, ignorant, filthy, closed-minded, savages, and harsh to women | 'To see how they ignore the islam and say sth not true about it.' | F |
| 5 | Texts which claim that Muslim women are oppressed and are treated as sub-humans by Muslim men and | A. 'I will read it to define (inform) foreign people that Arab/Muslim women are not oppressed, | F |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | accuse them of being inferior to other women | they are as men.'<br>B. 'to illustrate the right things.' | F |
| 6 | Texts which present Arabs/ Muslims as lacking courtesy, politeness, etiquette, and other forms of civilised behaviour | A. .'I don't like these topic, but I will read if it's necessary for curiousity only.'<br>B. 'To prove the opposite.'<br>C. [To] show others the fact about men in Arab or Islamic World + improve EL [English Language] skills. | F<br>F |
| 7 | Texts that call for denying Muslims and Arabs residence and/or citizenship rights in non-Muslim countries, call for deporting them ,and justify religious and ethnic cleansing against them | 'To know how much I am blessed with Islam.' | F |
| 8 | Texts that justify war and the use of military force against Arab and/ or Muslim countries | 'In order to know what happen in the world' | F |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Texts that openly discuss and encourage what is known as love affairs among males and females | 'To make clear that the islam is the right path.' | M |
| 11 | Texts that defend homosexuality | A. 'To make me sure how the islam has the right principles.'<br>B. 'To know more information.' | M<br><br>F |
| 15 | Texts that justify euthanasia | 'To know more about this topic.' | F |
| 16 | Texts that encourage conflicts and distrust between men and women | 'To gain some information about why women and men can't trust each other sometimes.' | F |
| 17 | Texts that encourage children to revolt against their parents | 'To preserve myself from these things.' | F |
| 18 | Texts that encourage alcohol, cigarette smoking, and staying up late at night | 'To find out why they encourage like these things.' | F |
| 20 | Texts that defend the US Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki | 'To have idea about this topic' | F |

In addition to the reasons provided by the subjects for reading some of the risky text-topics shown in the table 5, three of the subjects provided comments on the study as a whole, which are shown in table 6.

**Table 6: Comments provided by three of the subjects on the study as a whole**

| | Individual Reasons provided by some of the subjects | Subjects' sex |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 'My comment, These papers (questionnaire) are really rich of vocabularies (new ones) which is very useful for a reader.' | F |
| 2 | 'We can read to know how other think. Also, to get knowledge or to know more information about other people and their life.' | F |
| 3 | 'I would read (text-topics described in the questionnaire) because otherwise it's against our convictions as Muslims, we need to understand their convictions and attitudes. After all there might be something logical behind it and may be reliable too. Also, in order to confront them you need to know their points of view and then express yourself and prove them the opposite, because they are being so unfair to us.' | F |

Besides stressing the usefulness of the vocabulary items included in the questionnaire, the three comments as can be noticed show a strong desire to read the risky text-topics described in the study because these subjects want to understand other people's views and beliefs. This in turn confirms the assumption made earlier that the type of risky text-topics described in this study has the potential to increase students' motivation for improving their reading/writing skills and for learning more about the variety of topics discussed in English. The by-product will eventually be improving the students' overall skills and performance in all the skills and all the components the foreign language.

## Discussion and Recommendations

These results show that English majors at Rustaq College were more tolerant of the risky text-topics than is generally assumed. This is obvious from the approval of 15 out of the 20 text-topics listed in the questionnaire i.e. 75% of the risky text-topics were approved. It is true that five of the topics (25%) were disapproved though not totally rejected by all the subjects. It is worth noting that the respondents showed a strong desire to read most of the texts in order to respond to their content and dispute their claims. This in itself is a useful indicator, and it shows that when reading-writing instruction is linked to personal views and interests, and when real life issues are included, courses become more engaging for the students. Teachers can therefore exploit such a positive attitude in order to help students like these improve their writing skills. It might also be worth noting that despite the predominance of females in the sample, the majority showed interest in defending Islamic polygamy which was the most popular text topic for the sample. This apparently contradicts the general expectation among many non-Muslims that Muslim women fight polygamy in principle and in practice. This is an indication of how strongly the subjects take religious teachings. Overall, it can be argued that the sample of this study agreed that most of the text-topics investigated in this study are useful in reading/writing classes if used properly.

Thus while confirming the general belief and expectation that some of the topics surveyed are problematic, the respondents have shown relatively strong interest in reading the majority of the text-topics mainly for the purpose of challenging their claims and views. This shows that students in the Department of English have no problem with these risky topics when they realize that the purpose behind using them in reading/writing classes is to improve their literacy skills through engaging them, not to corrupt their minds or to spread decadent and offensive beliefs and lifestyles. It in turn indicates that these students possess the level of maturity and responsibility that would enable them to go beyond their cultural sensitivities in order to better understand their faith and their value system by looking at it from an external viewpoint. It can also be argued based on these results that the respondents who represent the population of students in the department of English at the six Colleges of Applied Sciences are interested in learning about beliefs, issues, views, and life styles different from theirs for their own reasons, and that they are aware of the diversity and sometimes conflicts of ideas that exist in the world of today. The decision is always for

the teacher and the administration, yet the results indicate that there is a possibility for using risky text-topics in order to motivate, brainstorm students with low motivation as well as those with high motivation and to take reading and writing more seriously. Exposing students to these texts has the potential of sensitising them to the fact that English as a foreign language must be approached, not just as an academic subject, but also as a powerful, valuable, and dangerous tool which is worth learning. It is possible therefore to make the following recommendations based on the results presented thus far:

1. Contrary to popular belief, texts containing risky topics can and should be utilized to engage students in productive work and to motivate them to improve their reading-writing skills through dealing with real-life content. When used prudently and appropriately, they can overcome problems such as boredom and resistance to learning and to classroom work which confront teachers in many classes.
2. Familiarity with the content of these text-topics is essential for understanding daily news reports, discussions, talk shows, and other shows on English TV channels, radio programmes, and on the internet i.e. for improving students' cultural literacy.
3. These texts can create lively discussions and can encourage students to voice their views in the target language, which in turn will improve their receptive and productive language skills.
4. In order to avoid negative reactions, objections, and complaints from students and from administration about the introduction of these texts in class, the teacher can follow some, or all of the following guidelines:
   - A. Explain his/her intentions behind requiring students to read, analyze, and respond to these texts. It is also useful to remind students that English, like all other languages expresses not just what conforms to our system of beliefs and values, but also what contradicts it.
   - B. Avoid showing that s/he in any way adopts, supports, or plans to propagate any of the views expressed in these texts. The teacher should as much as possible withhold his/her personal judgment on the content of these texts until the students have expressed their views and opinions on these texts.

C. Point out to the students that s/he understands their cultural and religious sensitivities towards these topics but at the same time s/he is using these texts for their own interest, namely for the purpose of improving their language skills and increasing their awareness of the multitudes of ideas, beliefs, and lifestyles that exist in our world.

A final note is that it is expected that all teachers may be able to utilize the risky text-topics described in this study in their reading/writing classes, but their use will be less explosive and more productive in contexts where the teacher shares the same linguistic and religious background with the students. It is hoped that future research will look at this issue more closely and with samples consisting of equal numbers of males and females in order to identify students' preferences for text-topics more clearly. It is only through continuous exploration of the impact of text-topics on our students that we will be able to improve the quality of the materials and the language input that we provide them with. It is also hoped that the results of this study and similar future studies will underscore the need for producing more engaging and less boring textbooks for reading-writing courses.

**Notes**

1. *The terms textbook* and coursebook are used interchangeably in this paper, though *textbook* is used chiefly in reference to reading-writing courses. The reason is that coursebooks typically cover all the macro-skills of language including reading and writing.
2. The name of the teacher who wrote the complaint against her students and the name of the head of the English department to whom the complaint was addressed are kept anonymous for confidentiality.
3. *'Khalas'* : This is an Arabic word transcribed in English alphabet, and it means I give up, or I won't try any further.

**References**

Al-Bikai, Yusuf S. (2003) Al-Shawkiat by the Prince of Poets. Cairo: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi.

Bell, Jan, and Gower, Roger. (2006). Writing course materials for the world: A great compromise. In Brian Tomlinson, (Ed.), Materials development in language teaching. (pp. 116-129). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dogancay-Aktuna, Seran. (2006). Expanding the socio-cultural knowledge base of TESOL teacher education. Language Culture and Curriculum, 19, 278-295.

Gray, John. (2002). The global coursebook in English language teaching. In D. Block, and D. Cameron, Globalization and language teaching. (pp. 151-167).London: Routledge.

Heyer, Sandra. 1994. Easy true stories: A picture-based beginning reader. London: Longman.

Mckay, Sandra Lee. (1994). Teaching English overseas. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Njadat, Juma S. (1989, February 24). Book anti-Moslem. The State News, p.4.

Nunan, David. (1994). Language teaching methodology. London: Prentice Hall.

Osterloh, K. (1986). Intercultural differences and communicative approaches to foreign-language teaching in the Third World in J. Valdes (Ed): Culture bound. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlinson, Brian. (2002). Humanising your coursebook: Activities to bring your classroom to life. London: English Teaching Professional/DELTA Publishing.

Tsou, Wenli. (2005). The effects of cultural instruction on foreign language learning. Regional language Centre Journal, 36(1), 40-57.

Tsehelska, Maryna. (2006). Teaching politically correct language. English Teaching Forum. 44(1), 20-23.

Williams, Ray. (1986). Top Ten Principles for Teaching Reading. English Language Teaching Journal. 40(1), 42-45.

**Correspondence**: Any correspondence should be directed to Juma S. Njadat. Department of English, Mu'tah University, Mu'tah PO Box. 7, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. E-mail address: juma_njadat@yahoo.com.

**Appendix A**

**A Letter by the author to the editor of *The State News on* Muslims' reactions to Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses, published* on 24/2/1989. Reprinted by permission from *The State News:* A campus daily published by Michigan State University. U.S.A**

## *Book anti-Moslem*

Many people might feel that the recent reactions by Moslems around the world to Salman Rushdie's book The Satanic Verses excessive and unwarranted. As a Moslem, I agree that there have been some excesses and I, like most Moslems, strongly disagree with the small minority of Moslems who are calling for the assassination of Rushdie and the publishers of his book. I should remind those who are putting a price on Rushdie's head that Prophet Mohammed in his lifetime tolerated all kinds of slanders and persecution from the pagans of his time.

However, I do not want to give the impression that I excuse Salman Rushdie for the obscene and grounless lies that he conveys in his book about the Prophet of Islam and the Moslem faith. I believe that his intentions behind writing his book are malicious and subversive. Rushdie's book comes at a time when we Moslems have suffered enough from distortions and misinformation about our culture and our religion. Lies and stereotyping like those expressed in The Satanic Verses have made it easier for ruthless and imperialistic powers in the world to invade our lands and commit all kinds of atrocities against our innocent people. We have learned the hard way what publications like The Satanic Verses do to us.

**—Juma S. Njadat**
**Graduate Student**
**English**

**Appendix B**
**Risky Texts and Topics as Viewed by Omani Students**
**A Questionnaire**

Dear students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your views and attitudes towards reading texts that contain topics and views that are generally considered unacceptable and offensive to Islamic teachings and to the Islamic/Arabic culture. The questionnaire consists of two:

1. Part One: Personal details
2. Part Two: Texts that contain anti-Muslim and/or anti-Arab views, opinions, convictions, or attitudes

In part one you are kindly asked to provide relevant personal details. Part 2 contains descriptions of some texts that express and views and topics that may not be acceptable to the majority of Muslim /Arab readers, and you are asked to express your personal attitude towards these texts by choosing the decision action that you may think appropriate from the five decisions/actions described in the table below.

**Part I: Personal Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sex: | M F |
| Age | |

Part Two: For each of the texts described in the table below, put an X mark under the number of the decision (1-5) that you think appropriate from your point of view you will make beside the text if you were asked to read this text.

| | Decision/Action |
|---|---|
| 1 | I won't read this type of texts at all even if it is required by the course plan/syllabus and even if I have to confront the instructor and the /department/college administration |
| 2 | I would read it only for the purpose of avoiding confrontation and getting a low mark on the course and jeopardizing my academic standing with the instructor and the administration of the department and college. |
| 3 | I would willingly read it out of curiosity and with an open mind, and in order to improve my English language skills |
| 4 | I will read it in order to criticize it and discredit its views and claims |
| 5 | I would read it for other reasons. Please specify these reasons: |

| Texts and their Content | Arabic Equivalent | Your Decision/ Action 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | I won't read at all at any cost | I will read only to avoid confrontation with instructors ,department, and low marks | I will read for curiosity and to improve my English language skills | I will read to criticize, refute, and discredit | I will read for other reasons: Please list: |
| Texts that attack Islam and its followers | | | | | | |
| Texts that label Muslims and Arabs as being backward, ignorant, filthy, closed-minded, savages, and harsh to women | | | | | | |
| Texts that link terrorism with Islam and Muslims | | | | | | |
| Texts which attack polygamy as legalized by Islam. | تعدد الزوجات | | | | | |
| Texts which claim that Muslim women are oppressed and are treated as sub-humans by Muslim men and accuse them of being inferior to other women | مضطهد | | | | | |
| Texts which present Arabs/ Muslims as lacking courtesy, politeness, etiquette, and other forms of civilised behaviour | | | | | | |
| Texts that call for denying Muslims and Arabs residence and/or citizenship rights in non-Muslim countries, call for deporting them ,and justify religious and ethnic cleansing against them | التطهير الديني والعرقي | | | | | |
| Texts that justify war and the use of military force against Arab and/ or Muslim countries | | | | | | |
| Texts that openly discuss sex and encourage dating, premarital sex, and other types of illicit sexual relationships | قبل الزواج غير شرعي | | | | | |
| Texts that openly discuss and encourage what is known as love affairs among males and females | | | | | | |
| Texts that defend homosexuality (gays and lesbians) | الشذوذ الجنسي | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Texts that defend same sex marriages | زواج مثلي الجنس | | | | | |
| Texts that defend nudity and nudists' culture | التعري من الملابس العراه | | | | | |
| Texts that defend abortion | الإجهاض | | | | | |
| Texts that justify euthanasia | القتل الرحيم | | | | | |
| Texts that encourage conflicts and distrust between men and women | | | | | | |
| Texts that undermine parental authority and instigate children to rebel against their parents | | | | | | |
| Texts that encourage alcohol, cigarette smoking, and staying up late at night | | | | | | |
| Texts that call for legalising drugs | | | | | | |
| Texts that defend the US Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki | | | | | | |